OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

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February 15, 2022

VIA EMAIL

Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
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Honourable John Horgan
Premier of British Columbia
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Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations
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Honourable Marco E.L. Mendicino
Minister of Public Safety
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Re: Freedom Convoy Hate Crimes

The Syilx Okanagan Nation Chief Executive Council is calling for swift response, and support, of regional officials and the RCMP to ensure the safety of our Nation members after receiving reports of a series of racially motivated violent crimes coming out of what is now referred to as Freedom Convoy movement on Syilx territory and throughout Turtle Island.

At 4:00 pm on February 5, 2022, a female, Syilx Nation member was verbally assaulted and intimidated by a group of white "Freedom Convoy" protestors at the Osoyoos border crossing. It was reported that they screamed racial slurs and derogatory statements as she was making her way to go through the border crossing. The perpetrators had singled out the victim out based on the visible Indian Residential School decals on her vehicle, as her vehicle and others inched slowly towards the border crossing. They would have also seen spiritual objects like her eagle feather hanging on the rearview mirror. These actions and barrage of racism witnessed by the victim were indeed hate crimes. As a visible Indigenous person, we are once again all reminded of the pervasive and brutal intolerance inherent in this movement, but also brings to light the normalization of violence that Syilx people endure on a daily basis. It also serves to illustrate the specific violence directed to Indigenous women throughout Canada, as we can see from the continued issues around MMIWG. It was clear that these demonstrations exhibit the evidence of white extreme supremacy followings in our own backyard.

Attacks like those suffered by one of our Syilx nation members on February 5 are beyond intolerable. We are calling on authorities at all levels to take immediate action to reject this Freedom convoy protest that obviously has breached or violated all citizens principles of our democracy. These participants or supporters have gone far beyond their actions of letting their governments know of their position on vaccination mandates, to rather that of promoting violence and hate speech.

In addition, on February 11, several Syilx youth witnessed a Caucasian woman who verbally assaulted an Indo-Canadian youth in front of the South Okanagan Secondary School (SOSS). As other Chiefs in the Nation, including Chief Greg Gabriel, has stated "We do not want to lose sight of the racist incident on Friday in front of SOSS nor this incident. These incidents are traumatic for the victim and all our youth that witness such acts. They will have this racist and bigoted memory for life. School grounds and school children are to be "off limits" from any protesting racist adults. We are extremely concerned for the safety of our women, youth and are calling for an appropriate response". The Chiefs want those that committed these hate crimes investigated by the proper authorities and those that incited these acts of violence held responsible.

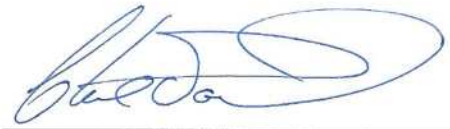
The messaging of the so called "Freedom Convoy" has taken an ugly turn and supporters are now using this to advance their racist and bigoted agenda. We urgently call upon border crossing officials, RCMP, local, Federal, Provincial government's representatives to meet with the Chiefs of the Syilx Okanagan Nation. These are just two incidents that have been brought directly to our attention, but numerous others have undoubtedly went unreported, and have been amplified through the Freedom Convoy movement.

On behalf of the Syilx Okanagan Nation and for the courage of the women who reported these two incidents, we stand in solidarity for all People of Color.

Please direct any inquiries concerning this letter to Pauline Terbasket, Executive Director of the Okanagan Nation Alliance by email, director@syilx.org or phone (250) 707-0095 ext. 214.

Sincerely,

OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE



ki law na Ylmixwm Clarence Louie
xa?tus, Tribal Chair

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